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THE FRENCH CONNECTION

French Catholic Influences upon Anglo-Catholicism in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

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French Roman Catholicism exercised a considerable influence upon many facets of the Anglo-Catholic movement throughout the second half of the nineteenth century: many of the new religious orders, for example, based themselves upon French models. This lecture examines three aspects of the French influence upon Anglo-Catholic pastoral work: home missions, the catechism and priestly ideals.

1. Home Missions

Evangelical Revivals and Anglo-Catholic Home Missions

Like the Evangelical Revival that preceded it the re-birth of Anglo-Catholicism brought new life into the Church: by the 1850s many parish priests were beginning to take their pastoral duties more seriously than their Georgian predecessors had done. At the same time they were faced with a multitude of pastoral problems: the indifference of the working class to church attendance came at the top of the list. Even a century earlier, when most people lived in villages and small country towns and were often under the close supervision of parsons and squires, it was already felt to be a problem. The bishop of Durham, Joseph Butler, made the 'general decay' of religion the main topic of his charge to the clergy of his diocese. It affected 'all ranks of society' but it was the 'thoughtlessness' of 'the generality of the common people' that was of most concern (Butler 1873, pp. 270-293). In 1851 the national census of population showed that one half of the people of England lived in towns and cities (the shift of population from country to town was to continue for the rest of the century). The census of church attendance taken in conjunction with the population census confirmed that the lowest level of churchgoing was to be found among the urban working class (Parsons 1988b, p. 67).

The Evangelicals responded to the problem of the 'decay' of religious observance by promoting religious revivals and Sunday schools. The Anglo-Catholics responded by promoting parish missions and the

catechism. The first section of this lecture will consider Anglo- Catholic home missions, which some historians have argued were strongly influenced by Evangelical revivals.

The Evangelical Revival took off in the 1730s and was followed by further revivals throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The earliest American revivalist preacher to sail to Britain in the nineteenth century was Lorenzo Dow. In 1807 Dow invited enquirers to camp out in the fields around Mow Cop in Staffordshire, where preachers called upon them to repent and put their faith in Jesus. Half a century later Charles Finney's revival meetings, planned and conducted by professional evangelists, ended with an invitation to 'inquirers' to come forward and give themselves to Jesus. In 1858 a 'Second Great Awakening' broke out in Ulster with weeping, trances and emotional fervour, and made many converts and boosted church attendances. In 1873 Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey toured Britain's major cities where they held well publicized mass meetings. Sankey's catchy *Sacred Songs and Solos* softened audiences up for Moody's homely and sentimental sermons that called upon them to make a decision for Jesus. Revivals became more organized and professional, less spontaneous and less demanding, yet retained many common features that marked them off from Catholic missions. They were lay-led, aimed at instant conversions, made little or no reference to church and sacrament, and equated justification by faith with the conversion experience (Parsons 1988a, pp. 213-223).

In his book on *Catholic Evangelicalism,* the German Lutheran church historian, Dieter Voll, argues that Anglo-Catholics adopted the revivalist approach to mission. He notes the many connections between the two movements that undoubtedly existed. Anglo-Catholic converts, like John Henry Newman and Samuel Wilberforce, retained some of their Evangelical heritage. Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics shared many common concerns: the conversion of the indifferent, combatting liberalism and the promotion of holiness of life in a worldly Church. Voll also highlights the fervour of Anglo-Catholic mission preachers like Arthur Stanton; yet fervour was not an Evangelical monopoly. Roman Catholic missioners, both in Britain and France, employed emotional, hell-fire preaching to arouse fervent devotion.

Voll fails to consider the influence of French Catholicism upon Anglo-Catholic home missions. His sole reference to the French Church is to complain that ritualist priests made 'borrowings from contemporary

Continental Catholicism, especially from France', that were 'not always wise or tasteful' (Voll 1963, p. 26). But his detailed exposition of A.J.Mason's book on *The Ministry of Conversion* (discussed below) fails to note Mason's reference to the celebrated Bishop 0f Orleans, Felix Dupanloup (1802-1878), as an authority on mission preaching. Professor John Kent finds Dr Voll's book 'interesting but mistaken'. The Anglo-Catholic Missions to London of 1869 and 1874 were not, as Voll believed, 'a kind of reconciliation between Anglo-Catholicism and Evangelicalism of permanent value for the ecumenical future'. The 'inspiration for this aggressive phase' of the Anglo-Catholic movement 'was really the French Catholic 'mission', which originated in the seventeenth century and was revived 'vigorously' after 1815. Kent believes Voll fell into the trap of letting himself be 'influenced by later ecclesiastical needs'. The reconciliation between Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics, that Voll longed for, did not take place in the nineteenth century. In fact 'the missions carried out by the Anglo-Catholic Cowley Fathers, with their reliance on the framework supplied by the sacramental system, their use of French services such as ... the renewal of baptismal vows ... were bitterly criticized by the Evangelicals' (Kent 1969, p.322). French Catholicism, not Evangelicalism, was the major influence on Anglo-Catholic approaches to home missions in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The French Connection: Charles Lowder and St Vincent de Paul

On the 6th May, 1854, Charles Blomfield, the Bishop of London, suspended Charles Lowder, the assistant curate of St Barnabas' church, Pimlico, from his pastoral duties. Lowder had given some boys sixpence to buy rotten eggs to throw at a billboard man who was advertising the name of an anti-ritualist candidate for the post of churchwarden at St Barnabas. Lowder took the opportunity afforded by this enforced break to sail to France, where he stayed at the minor seminary of the diocese of Rouen. While there he read a life of St Vincent de Paul (1580-1660) and was struck by the similarity between the state of the French Church in the saint's day and that of the Church of England in his own. In both cases worldly parish priests neglected their pastoral duties and left their parishioners ignorant of Christian faith and practice (Ellsworth 1982, pp. 16-21).

The French church historian, Henri Daniel-Rops, rates St Vincent de Paul very highly indeed: he was 'the most significant man in the history of French Catholicism, and perhaps in the whole Church' (Daniel-Rops

1963, p. 14). As a young priest Vincent was strongly influenced by Fr Pierre de Berulle (1575-1629), the leader of the French spiritual revival of the early seventeenth century. When St Vincent was appointed parish priest of a small market town he found his parishioners had been neglected by ignorant and immoral predecessors. Many of his parishioners were hostile and suspicious at first but were won over by his simple preaching and loving pastoral care. When he realized the evangelization of a rural parish was too much for one man he established a company of secular priests, 'The Congregation of the Mission'. After they established their headquarters at the priory of St Lazaire in Paris they became known as 'the Lazarists'. By the time of St Vincent's death in 1660 the Lazarists had 131 priests, 25 houses and had conducted 840 parish missions (Daniel-Rops 1973, pp. 1-24).

St Vincent's ideals and methods were revived after 1815 when the Church attempted to re-evangelize the nation after the ravages of the French Revolution and its aftermath.

On his return home Lowder persuaded five like-minded London curates to join him in founding a company of mission priests, 'The Society of the Holy Cross' ('Societas Sanctae Crucis' or SSC), with aims similar to those of 'The Congregation of the Mission'. The main aims of the SSC were to deepen the spiritual lives of its members; conduct home missions; and publicize Catholic faith and practice. In 1856 Bryan King, the Rector of the vast parish of St Paul's, Shadwell, invited Lowder to establish a mission house and church in the centre of Wapping. A year later he opened a second chapel in Wellclose Square, where he was assisted by Elizabeth Neale and two other nuns from the Community of the Holy Cross, which modelled itself on St Vincent de Paul's Sisters of Charity (Ellsworth, pp. 16-25). In 1869 the SSC joined with The Society of St John the Evangelist ('the Cowley Fathers') to plan a twelve day Mission in 120 London parishes. The Cowley Fathers were founded by R.M.Benson in 1865 as a company of mission priests based on the model of St Vincent de Paul's Lazarists.

The 1869 Mission to London was very different from contemporary Evangelical revivals. Anglo-Catholic missions were conducted by priests in parish churches; their aim was not to press for instant conversions, but to initiate a process of gradual conversion through ever deeper participation in the sacramental life of the Church. During a Mission priests would constantly refer to the beginning of the Christian life in

baptism and the final Mission service usually ended, like French mission services, with the renewal of baptismal vows. People were encouraged to make their confessions, become regular communicants and to accept spiritual direction. John Henry Newman's classic statement of Catholic doctrine, *Lectures on the Doctrine of Justification*, teaches that we are made righteous through the 'divine indwelling'. Justification begins in baptism and the sacraments are the primary instruments of justification (Dulles 2002, pp. 21-24). This sacramental and church based based doctrine of justification distinguishes the Catholic idea of conversion from the revivalist personal experience of Jesus.

The Ministry of Conversion

Arthur James Mason's *The Ministry of Conversion* sets out the Anglo-Catholic idea of mission and conversion. In 1877 the Bishop of Truro, Edward White Benson (1829-1896), invited Mason to become the Church of England's first Canon Missioner, with a brief to promote parish missions and counter Cornish popular revivalism. Seven years later Benson, now elevated to Canterbury, installed Mason as the incumbent of a small but well endowed London parish as a base from which he was to establish a college for mission preachers and convert the upper classes. Mason's most substantial theological work, *The Relation of Confirmation to Baptism,* advocates the Anglo-Catholic doctrine - the 'Mason-Dix line' - that the full gift of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is imparted in Confirmation. Each Lent Term from 1883 onwards six pastoral theology lectures were given by prominent pastors in the Cambridge School of Divinity. In 1892 Mason gave six lectures on parish missions which were published ten years later as *The Ministry of Conversion*. Mason argues that mission and conversion are as much matters of pastoral concern to Anglo-Catholics as they are to Evangelicals. Although the term 'conversion' is hard to define and misused by revivalists it refers to a vital spiritual change that all parish priests need to understand. The New Testament sometimes describes conversion as an 'effect produced upon a man'; more often as 'a movement of the man himself'; either way it refers to 'the bringing of the soul' into 'a right relationship with God'. It involves 'a change of attitude or direction' and the adoption of a new way of life (Mason 1902, pp. 1-31).

No one is free of original sin so all need to be converted. In most parishes the majority of people have been baptized but few show much evidence of spiritual regeneration. They have the outward appearance of religion but

remain inwardly unmoved. Priests should help them allow baptismal grace to become effective in their lives and seize any pastoral opportunity, such as a confirmation class or a bereavement, to rouse them from spiritual torpor.

Mason recommends Bishop Dupanloup's advice on preaching. Instruction for the converted should be given on Sunday mornings. Evening sermons to the unconverted should also be expository and instructive for people grow weary of mere exhortation. Parochial missions work best in well prepared parishes where a visiting preacher can build on what has been achieved. Although usually conducted in church, missions should also be taken into pubs and the streets, though 'the vulgarities' of the sects and revivalists must be avoided. There is no one correct pattern of conversion, which may be gradual or sudden and accompanied by a variety of experiences. The wise priest tolerates a range of responses but insists the test of true conversion is holiness of life not excited feeling. Wesley used excitement to arouse interest, but excitement 'can no more convert the soul ... than the dinner bell can take the place of dinner'. When his early converts fell away Wesley realized he had confused hysteria with the work of the Holy Spirit. The clergy should not adopt the emotionalism of popular evangelists, for it neither enlightens the mind nor strengthens the will, and leaves people at the mercy of their feelings. Any priest who is inwardly convinced of the truth of the Gospel preaches fervently yet with restraint. It is the message that counts, the influence of the truth upon the mind and will, not excited feelings. When consciences are stirred some anxiety and inner turmoil are to be expected, but people must not be driven to despair. The good pastor teaches the anxious that baptism assure us of God's love and that, though fallen, we remain 'capable of restoration' for we retain the image of God in our souls (Mason, pp. 32-89).

Conclusion

The efforts of Anglo-Catholic missions met with limited success. Like most Evangelical revivals home missions were better at drawing in those who already had some attachment to the Church than in attracting those wholly outside the Christian community. By 1900 the SSC was concentrating more on promoting priestly ideals than on promoting home missions (Pickering 1987, p. 73).

2. The Catechetical Method of St Sulpice

The Evangelicals promoted Sunday schools as a way of winning the absent working class to Christian faith and practice. Anglo-Catholic priests made use of Sunday schools but insisted they should serve the teaching of the Prayer Book catechism.

The Tractarians and the Catechism

Teaching the catechism was taken very seriously by Tractarian parish priests, who insisted on the primacy of moral and religious instruction. They feared the growth of day schools and secular instruction would alienate the working class still further from the Church. John Keble took his Sunday afternoon catechism class in Hursley church as seriously as he took preaching on Sunday mornings and gave as much time to lesson preparation as he did to sermon writing (Battiscombe 1963, p. 176). In his Tractarian pastoral handbook, *Parochial Work,* Edward Monro argues that the Prayer Book catechism is 'the essentially Catholic mode of instruction': the surest way of building up the life of the Church in the parish. Like Keble he insists the catechism should be taught in the day school as well as in church. It is not only the best method of teaching, its questions and answers make children think, it also demonstrates the primacy of priestly religious instruction over lay secular instruction. It ensures children will become faithful communicant members of the Church (Monro 1851, pp. 148-155).

Following the Gorham Judgement of 1851, the Archdeacon of Sussex, Henry Manning, converted to Roman Catholicism. R.W.Randall (1824-1906), who succeeded him as the incumbent of two rural parishes, used the Sunday afternoon catechism as an opportunity to address adults as well as children and to restore confidence in the Church. When he left Lavington in 1867 to become the first parish priest of the new Anglo-Catholic parish of All Saints, Clifton, he had established the catechism at the heart of parish life. Randall was often invited to lecture on the subject at Church Congresses. He insists the catechism, 'the public instruction of the children of the Church by their pastors', should be taught in church. The building fills children with awe, the font reminds them of their baptisms and the sight of the altar encourages them to look forward to their first communions. The catechist must always be a priest for he alone has been given grace and authority to teach 'God's own truth' (Randall 1873: 417 ff.).

The French Connection: The Catechetical Method of St Sulpice

The advent of a national system of elementary schools in 187o, together with the rise of a teaching profession and the setting up of local board schools that excluded the clergy and denominational religious instruction, caused priests to fear they were falling behind. Some tried to catch up by adopting modern teaching methods: others turned to the catechetical method of the Parisian church of Saint Sulpice. Anglo-Catholic priests continued to teach the Prayer Book catechism, but towards the end of the Victorian era many turned to the catechetical method of the Parisian church of Saint Sulpice to help them teach it better. John Kent does not mention this aspect of French influence upon Anglican Catholics though it strengthens his argument.

The method of Saint Sulpice was pioneered in the seventeenth century by a younger contemporary and follower of St Vincent de Paul, Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1657), who was cured of blindness on a pilgrimage to Loreto and ordained priest in 1633. In 1642 he was put in charge of the huge rundown parish of Saint Sulpice, where he established a seminary and a society of secular priests. He made the catechism - taught after Sunday vespers - central to his pastoral work and training of seminarians. In 1652 Olier produced a printed catechism for twelve classes, each instructed by two priests or seminarians.

The use of the catechetical method of St Sulpice was revived throughout France after 1815 as a key part of the Church's effort to reintroduce the Christian faith. Fr Faillon, who produced a definitive edition of Olier's catechism in 1832 and wrote a life of Olier, attributes the catechism's success to its insistence on punctilious preparation and planning and compares it to the rules of etiquette of the royal court. The deepest secret of its success, though, was Olier's insistence upon the catechist's loving care of his pupils. The catechist should not only aim to instruct his pupils' minds, he should also use his personal influence to deepen their devotion to Christ and the sacraments.

The standard nineteenth-century handbook to the method was composed by Felix Dupanloup who grew up in poverty and had himself attended the catechism at Saint Sulpice as a child. Dupanloup was a leading Catholic educationist: two years after he was made Bishop of Orleans in 1849 he negotiated the right of the Church to run her own voluntary schools. (He was also the leader of those who left the First Vatican Council before the vote on papal infallibility.) Dupanloup was convinced that the method of

Saint Sulpice was the Church's best form of catechetical training and shared Fr Faillon's belief that its secret was its emphasis upon the catechist's personal care for his pupils (Colomb 1963, pp. 98-119).

Dupanloup's manual, first published in 1869, was translated into English by Anglo-Catholic enthusiasts in 1890 as *The Ministry of Catechising,* but the method was only widely adopted in England when shorter handbooks for Anglican use were published. In 1895, after a trip to Paris to see the catechism at work for himself, John Spencer Jones, the Rector of Batsford with Moreton-in-Marsh, published *The Clergy and the Catechism*. He commends the method of St Sulpice for its emphasis upon detailed planning and clerical control. Sunday schools have their place but merely as nurseries for the catechism; 'the great event of Sunday after the sacraments'. Although the clergy may lack elementary school-teachers' skills the use of the method of St Sulpice enables them to match their expertise. Secular teachers train children's intellects but neglect their souls. The French method enables priests to draw upon the grace and authority of ordination to teach a definite faith and 'deep piety' in children. They are able to teach them as whole persons by touching their hearts, wills and consciences as well as their intellects (Spencer Jones 1895, pp. & 4ff.). Robert Edwin Johnston, the Vicar of Cheriton Street in Kent, commends the method of St Sulpice because it provides an opportunity to put a Catholic gloss upon the factual religious instruction of the day school. The catechist must be a priest with full control over his lay helpers, who should be filled with 'love for children' and willing to attend instruction classes (Johnston 1897, pp. 19 ff.). In 1895 Johnston had 236 children on his catechism roll and seven men and a dozen women teachers who met once a week for instruction on the coming Sunday's lessons. When Arthur Chandler (1859-1939), the author of a popular work on Christian mysticism, became the Rector of Poplar in 1891, he inherited a huge parish with a largely indifferent working-class population He concluded the best way forward was to win over the young to Catholic faith and practice by using the method of Saint Sulpice. His 1899 handbook, *The Greater Catechism*, describes the Sunday afternoon catechism at Poplar in detail Chandler 1899, pp. 1ff.). The catechist and his helpers arrive at 2.30 pm and at 3.00 pm register the 400 pupils. During the following hour the children are taken through three exercises that each involve a separate faculty. Questions on the previous week's work test the memory; instruction on a new topic involves the intelligence; a brief concluding homily touches the heart and will. At the end of the hour the

children take home an 'analysis' to complete and hand in the following week (Chandler 1899, pp. 44ff.).

Conclusion

The major obstacle to building up a Christian community through the catechism was not recruitment - parents were all too glad to be rid of their children on Sunday afternoons - but in persuading older children to stay on when they left day school. At Poplar Chandler tried to bind them into the catechism by making them monitors and members of communicant guilds. But most children who came from non-churchgoing homes fell away from church attendance when they left school. Children sent to church by parents who failed to reinforce what they learned in the catechism were soon assimilated into the non-churching culture of the workplace. Anglo-Catholics continued to use the catechetical method of Saint Sulpice during the early decades of the twentieth century until advances in educational thought and practice made it obsolete.

3. The French Priestly Ideal

The Anglo-Catholic Priest

A distinctive feature of Anglo-Catholic approaches to mission and catechetics was an emphasis upon the central role of the priest and sacraments. Evangelical revivals were led by laymen. Their aim was to bring individuals into a personal relationship with Christ: Church and sacrament played little or no part. Anglo-Catholic missions were planned and conducted by priests whose aim was to increase and deepen participation in the sacramental life of the Church. Sunday schools were often attached to Nonconformist chapels or professed no denominational allegiance at all. Usually they were lay-run by teachers who were often former pupils. High Church priests tolerated Sunday schools so long as they were firmly under their control, taught the catechism and guided their pupils to become communicant members of the Church. R.W.Randall and the authors of the manuals on the use of the method of Saint Sulpice, stressed that the catechist had to be a priest who alone had the authority and grace to teach the faith. The enhancement of the priesthood became the principal aim of the SSC, which grew from 105 members in 1866 to 376 in 1882. In time, as its mission work became less important, Lowder

came to believe its chief aim was to realize 'the supernatural power of the priesthood' (Pickering 1987, pp. 73).

In the mid-1850s Thomas Thelluson Carter (1808-1901) gave a series of lectures on the priesthood to his deanery chapter, which were first published in 1856 as *The Doctrine of the Priesthood.* Carter claims the widely held 'presbyter' idea of the ministry, that the priest's chief task is to preach, is not the Church's official doctrine: the Church of England upholds the traditional 'sacerdotal' ideal that the priest's primary task is to celebrate the sacraments. Carter acknowledges there is little evidence of the sacerdotal idea of the ministry in the New Testament, but insists it was universally accepted from the sub-apostolic period onwards. At the Reformation the Church of England retained the term 'priest', when the Protestant churches on the Continent rejected it, because she intended to retain a sacerdotal ministry (Carter 1856, p. 28). Even more important than the historical evidence is the theological argument that sacerdotalism is a vital expression of the fundamental Christian principle of mediation, the supreme instance of which is the Incarnation. Christ instituted the priesthood to continue his work of mediation and to channel divine grace through the medium of the priesthood and sacraments. Salvation is not normally imparted 'by direct influence upon the soul', as Protestants teach, but mediated 'through the outward means of human agency', as the Catholic Church teaches. Preaching is not the priest's most important task, neither is it a means of grace, it is 'instrumental' to a 'higher purpose': to teach the meaning and use of the sacramental means of grace. Thus there is a fundamental difference between the 'presbyter' ideal of the ministry and the 'sacerdotal' ideal of the priesthood (Carter 1856, pp. 28ff.).

The French Connection: The Priestly Ideal

Carter's doctrine of the priesthood reflects the priestly ideal dominant in the Western Catholic Church between the Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council, which was brought to perfection by the French Church in the seventeenth century and came to influence the whole Western Church. The Council of Trent met intermittently between 1546 and 1563 in a series of attempts to reform the Church and counter the Protestant challenge. It proceeded by issuing two parallel sets of of decrees: one set dealt with practical reforms; the other defined Catholic doctrines by countering Protestant objections. One of the principal aims of the Council was to raise the educational, moral and spiritual standards of the priesthood. A reform decree, that ordered the establishment of a seminary in every diocese and

was not concerned with anti-Protestant polemic, made training in the proclamation of the word and pastoral care of central importance in priestly formation alongside the celebration of the sacraments. The doctrinal decrees made no mention of areas of agreement between Protestants and Catholics and so tended to present incomplete statements of Catholic doctrine. Protestants rejected the current teaching on the sacrifice of the Mass, which appeared to them to suggest that Christ's sacrifice on the Cross needed priestly augmentation. They insisted that the ordained minister's chief task is not to not to offer the sacrifice of the Mass but to proclaim of the word of God. In its doctrinal decree on the priesthood the Council of Trent countered by re-affirming the doctrine of the sacrificial priesthood. The importance of the proclamation of the word was not explicitly stated. When seminaries were eventually established in early seventeenth-century France it was the dogmatic decree on priesthood, not the reform decree, that shaped the priestly image that was to dominate the Church down to Vatican II.

The priestly ideal of the French school of Fr de Berulle, St John Eudes, Fr Olier and the seminary of Saint Sulpice, was rooted in a deep sacramental spirituality and produced many holy lives. But it has been judged one-sided by a number of twentieth-century Roman Catholic theologians (Schillebeeckx 1985, pp. 198-203). In *The Priestly Office* Cardinal Avery Dulles discusses a short book written by Pope Benedict XVI, then Joseph Ratzinger, shortly before Vatican II. He 'emphasizes the fundamental equality of all Christians', rejects any 'exaggerated separation between the special ministry of the ordained and the general ministry of the faithful', and 'indicates a distaste for sacrificial and hierarchical language'. Ratzinger welcomed Vatican II's Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, because it 'eliminated the one-sided idea of priesthood as sacrifice'. He quoted with approval the Council's statement that: 'It is the first duty of the priest to proclaim the gospel of God to all.' Vatican II revived the balanced account of the ministry in the reform decree of the Council of Trent (Dulles 1997, pp. 21-22).

Conclusion

Nineteenth-century Anglo-Catholics parish priests were confronted by many pastoral problems: the reluctance of the urban working class to attend church regularly was the most difficult. Many priests turned to the example of the French Catholic Church's efforts to overcome the effects of the French Revolution for inspiration. They found the French sacramental approach to home missions much more congenial than the non-sacramental approach of contemporary Evangelical revivalism. They looked to the catechetical method of Saint Sulpice as a way of teaching the Prayer Book catechism more effectively at a time when educational standards were rising. They were inspired as missioners and catechists by the French model of priesthood. Though subsequent Catholic thought has found it one-sided, it inspired many faithful priests, like Charles Lowder, with a high ideal of the priestly ministry.

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